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SIETAR USA Statement of Concern Regarding Separation of Immigrant Families at the U.S. Border

On behalf of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR USA), the Board of Directors would like to express our deep concern and strong opposition to the U.S. Administration's policy of separating immigrant parents and children who are detained while crossing the border into the United States. Based on empirical evidence of the psychological harm that children and parents experience when separated¹, we assert that this policy must end and a commitment made to a more humane practice of housing families together pending immigration proceedings to protect them from further trauma.

The current policy calls for children to be removed from their parents and placed for an often indeterminate period of time in isolated confinement. We know that it is in the best interest of children and families to keep them together. Families fleeing their homes to seek sanctuary in the United States are already under a tremendous amount of stress. Sudden and unexpected family separation, such as separating families at the border, can add to that stress, leading to long term emotional trauma in children².

SIETAR USA is a leading intercultural organization representing the fields of intercultural relations and diversity and inclusion in the United States. Many of our members serve immigrant youth and adults in a wide range of settings. One of our goals is to foster effective relations across cultures, and to work with students, business people, and community members to expand worldviews and build skills for successful global citizenship. We feel that the current policy is antithetical to our mission and to the critical importance of our shared humanity and common decency.

¹ Chaudry, A. (2011). Children in the aftermath of immigration enforcement. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 4 (1), 137-154.

² Dreby, J. (2012). The burden of deportation on children in Mexican immigrant families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74, 829-845. Doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00989x